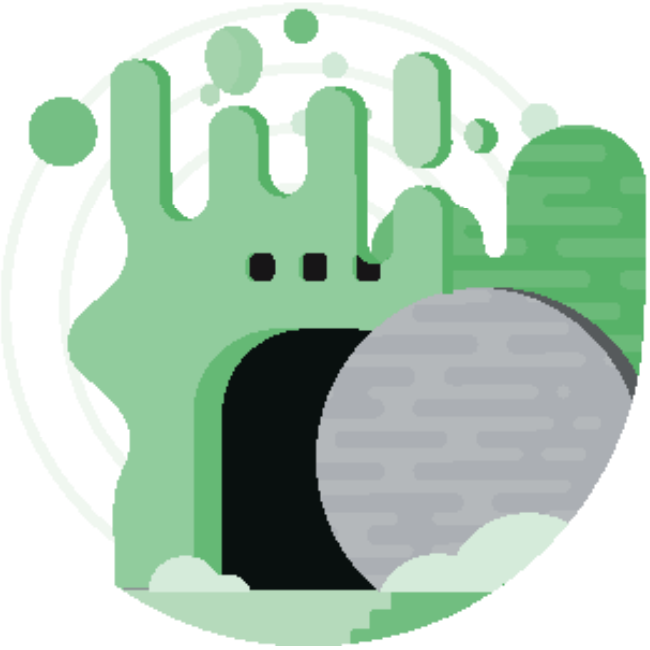


Unit .20

Easter

Alive With Christ

Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:1-11,20-22

1 Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **3** For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. **6** Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me. **9** For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. **11** Whether, then, it is I or they, so we proclaim and so you have believed. … **20** But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. **22** For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Intro Options

Main Point:
The historical resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for Christian faith.

Option 1

Your students have been hired as consultants for a media group. They want to produce a movie or TV show or comic book entitled, "When I Found Out X, It Changed Everything." The "X" can be whatever your students want. It could be the discovery of a secret super power, it could be discovering the betrayal of a friend, it could be figuring out how to study.

In pairs or alone, students should come up with an idea for what "X" will be, and then make a short pitch explaining what their movie/TV show/comic book will be about. They can come up with verbal ideas, or they can make some storyboards or comic panels if they like (and depending on time constraints). Have them share their pitches after they've had time to prepare them.

What common patterns did they see? What kind of discoveries change our lives? What kind don't? Today's lesson will be about the good news of Jesus' resurrection. Should such news change our lives?

Option 2

A local TV station (or YouTube channel, if you prefer to be more up-to-date) wants to air a new program called Power News. Power News will share news stories that empower people: news that gives people new opportunities or options. Your students are in charge of assembling the first show.

As a large group, brainstorm some categories for the different segments. They could use traditional news segments (sports, entertainment, international, weather) or come up with new ones (gaming, geography, or even herbs & spices). Once you have a list, assign different students (or groups of students) to each category. Now, each student (or group) is to come up with a short (30-seconds to two-minutes) segment to air on their category. Remember, they are coming up with Power News: news that empowers people. They'll be making this stuff up. It could be combos for the latest action video game, sales at nearby stores, opportunities for athletes or fans: whatever they can think up.

Give them a few minutes to put together their segments and then "air" your first episode. Debrief by talking about what news moves people to action. Why don't we really do anything about most news stories? Does the good news of Jesus' resurrection compel us to action or not?

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

Good news is contagious; we can't keep it to ourselves. We see an example of this in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. When Paul was in Corinth, he preached the gospel, the good news. Paul did not dream up this story; he heard it and believed it, and he turned around with what he had received and told anyone who would listen about who Jesus is and what He has done.

What is the gospel? The word gospel simply means "good news," but biblically, it means something of ultimate importance: Christ died for our sins and was raised to life again, according to the Scriptures (vv. 3-4).

God, the eternal Creator of all things, created us for relationship with Him. Yet each of us has sinned against God, meaning we've chosen our way over God's way (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23). Because God is holy—completely good and completely separate from evil—our sin separates us from God. God's righteous verdict for our sin is death and judgment (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3). Yet God sent His Son into the world to save us from this. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, came to live a sinless life, die on the cross in our place, and rise from the grave that we might have eternal life and joy (Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Our response to the gospel now is no different from the Corinthians. For the believer, it starts in the past, moves to the present, and looks ahead to the future (1 Cor. 15:1-2).

- **In the Past**: We received the gospel when we first heard the good news of Jesus Christ and believed. We heard who Christ was and that through Him alone we could be reconciled to God. The Holy Spirit drew our hearts to the truth. We repented and believed, and we became brand new people (2 Cor. 5:17).
- **In the Present**: Right now, believers stand on the gospel. The gospel wasn't just the good news that our sins were forgiven; it's the good news that we have a restored relationship with God through Jesus.
- **In the Future**: We will be saved by the gospel. Christ's death and resurrection assures us that our sins are forgiven, that God is with us today, and that someday we will be with Him for eternity.

- **Why is it important for Christians to consider the past, present, and future aspects of the gospel in their lives?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 56, DDG)

Life after Death

The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, he or she immediately is with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:43). This is what some people call an intermediate state, given that the final state for believers takes place at the future resurrection (Rev. 6:10-11). For those who are not in Christ, life after death results in being separated from Christ in a state of suffering, even though future judgment remains (Luke 16:19-31).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The historical resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 15

1-11. By this time in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul had addressed several ongoing sins and struggles in the church. Therefore, he ended by reminding them of the great antidote for all of their troubles—the gospel. Paul was writing to a group of believers who had already received the gospel, yet they needed a reminder that the gospel is central for all of life. The gospel is not just what begins new life and a relationship with Christ, it also shapes daily life in Christ. The church in Corinth was clearly not living out the gospel—they were experiencing divisions in the church, sexual immorality, bragging of all kinds (especially about spiritual gifts, knowledge, eloquent speech, and status), greed, and idolatry. In other words, they were building their lives, hope, and status on things other than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In essence, Paul gave them a gentle rebuke, calling them to live like Christ-followers by reminding them of the gospel. Notice the progression of his language:

- "You received" (past conversion): The gospel is the good news that through Jesus—His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection—we have right standing before God.
- "On which you have taken your stand" (present sanctification): We take our stand on the gospel as it continually reshapes our emotions, motivations, self-understanding, and identity. It has been said that a saint is a sinner who falls down, and then gets back up in the power of the Spirit.
- "By which you are being saved" (future glorification): The gospel proclaims the coming of a new kingdom, a new world. This promise of future salvation provides believers with a hope that cannot be taken from them.

Therefore, hold fast! Remember the good news. As all of us grow in the faith, we begin to see that the gospel was not just something to begin our relationship with Christ. Returning to the gospel and applying it to our hearts is how we grow in our faith. We don't grow in Christ by going beyond the gospel, but by going deeper into the gospel.

In Defense (p. 58, DDG)

"Did Jesus rise bodily, or was it just his spirit that arose? According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus rose as a spirit creature. However, the evidence recorded during the forty days after Jesus' resurrection says otherwise. For instance, the disciples initially thought that the risen Lord was a ghost, but Jesus corrected them by pointing out that he couldn't be a ghost 'because a ghost does not have flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39). He even ate some fish to put the matter beyond all doubt (Luke 24:41-43). Thomas touched Jesus' hands and side to confirm that he had risen bodily (John 20:24-29). Paul even declared that the Christian faith 'is in vain' if Christ did not bodily rise form death (1 Cor. 15:14). Why? Because the penalty for sins is death, and Jesus set out to take this penalty upon himself and overturn it forever in his resurrection from death. This could not have been accomplished if his body remained dead in the tomb, suffering the consequences of sin's penalty."[1]

TEACHING PLAN

Read 1 Corinthians 15:8-11.

Christ's resurrection is not a story in a book of fairy tales; it is a true story that connects to our daily lives. We are not merely to agree with the reality of Christ's resurrection; it's meant to impact us personally. The good news of Jesus changes us completely.

Paul didn't walk with Jesus before His resurrection. He even persecuted the church and oversaw the execution of at least one Christian before becoming a Christian himself (Acts 7:57–8:1). Yet God's grace completely transformed Paul. The power of the resurrected Christ had changed him from the inside out. As a Pharisee, Paul had tried to earn the approval of God by keeping all of the rules, and he excelled in this (Gal 1:14). But when he finally received God's grace, he went from being a person who hated Christ and the church to being a champion of Christ and His church.

- **What are some ways we might try to earn God's approval instead of resting in His grace?**
- **How has your life changed since coming to faith in Christ and believing in His death and resurrection?**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

In ancient times, an Israelite farmer would take the firstfruits of a crop harvest and offer it to God in recognition of His blessing upon the earth (Lev. 23:9-14). This was a statement of faith that the harvest would continue. In the same way, the resurrection of Christ stands as the firstfruits of the resurrection for all Christians. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we will live again after we die. Just as Christ was given a new body that will never decay or die, we'll also have bodies that will never die or sin or get sick (1 Cor. 15:50-58). All of this happens not by anything that we have done but through the work of one man—Jesus Christ.

But what if there were no resurrection? What would we lose? Everything! If Jesus weren't raised from the dead, then our sins wouldn't be forgiven (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Remember the sting and filth and shame of your sin? Remember how hopeless you were without God? Because of the resurrection, we are assured that we have peace with God, and we're set free from the power of sin by something even stronger—the power of the gospel.

Paul wanted us to understand the link between Jesus' resurrection and our hope. Because Jesus lives, we know that we too will live. Because Jesus defeated death, we know that death doesn't have the final word over us.

- **How would you explain to someone that Christianity is all dependent upon the historical resurrection of Jesus?**
- **Since the future resurrection is central to the Christian life, what are some ways it should influence the way we live today?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
The historical resurrection of Jesus is the foundation for Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 15

12-19. The entirety of the Christian message hinges on the truth that Jesus resurrected from the dead. If Jesus did not rise, we are still left in our sin. If Jesus did not rise, death has the last word. In this sense, our lives don't validate the gospel, but the gospel validates and transforms our lives. All of the aspects of the gospel, such as Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death, are vital. But this part—the resurrection—is what gives us our greatest confidence and hope in the entirety of the gospel. Paul focused on the resurrection in this passage, because the resurrection is the means of a transformed life.

Activity

Give each student drawing utensils and paper. Ask them to think of nouns that could be used to describe them: church member, athlete, musician, sibling, etc. Ask each of them to choose one of those titles and to write that word in a corner of the paper.

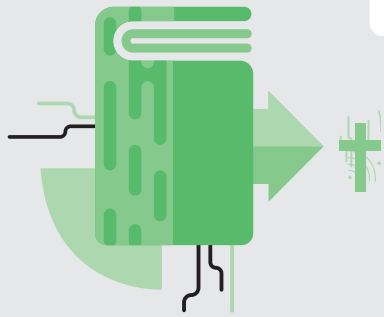
Next, they should draw a line down the middle of the paper; label one side "Before" and the other side "After." They are going to make a drawing of themselves in whatever role they wrote down earlier. The "Before" side will show them in that role before they heard the good news of Jesus' resurrection. The "After" side should show them in that same role, but after hearing the good news of Jesus' resurrection. In the after side, what is the result (from the lesson) of hearing the good news? How does the "power" that comes from Jesus' resurrection change them? Give them some time to make their drawings. Thought or speech bubbles are welcome.

Try not to let them fall into the "after becoming a Christian we need to be nicer people" trope. Try to get them to show to how the power of the Holy Spirit compels us to find happiness in Jesus by trusting His promises (secured by the resurrection!); we no longer find happiness by using our own power. Therefore, a student might no longer stress over grades; she would still do her best, but she trusts that the power in her is actually Jesus, so she doesn't need to stress over her own inadequacies.

After everyone has finished, allow volunteers to share their "before and after" pictures. What other areas of our lives should be different as a result of the resurrection? How can we trust Jesus' power in these areas of our lives? How can we trust Jesus' power as we show and tell others about Jesus' resurrection?

(p. 57, DDG) Christ Connection

The resurrection of Jesus represents the power of God to change lives and usher in the new world He has promised. Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruits of the future resurrection of His people, the guarantee that God's kingdom will come fully to earth, and the first nail in the coffin of death, which will one day be defeated forever.



ALIVE WITH CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:1–11, 20–22

ALIVE WITH CHRIST

The historical resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith.

JESUS CONNECTION

The resurrection of Jesus shows God's power and ability to change lives. Jesus' resurrection affirms the future resurrection of His people, the guarantee that God's kingdom will come fully to Earth, and the certainty that death will one day be defeated forever.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

CONFIDENCE – Full trust and assurance in the reliability of a person or thing.

HEAD

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 again. Paul tells us the gospel message is of first importance. Fill in the blanks to finish this message below.

- That Jesus _____ for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3)
- That He was _____ (1 Cor. 15:4)
- That He _____ _____ on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4)
- That He _____ to His disciples, many others and Paul (1 Cor. 15:5-8)

HEART

How does the gospel (that Jesus died, was buried, rose again and appeared) give us confidence when we are uncertain or afraid?

Many people are afraid to die or are uncertain about what comes after death. How does Jesus' life, death and resurrection give us confidence to face death with hope?

HANDS

The promise of the resurrection is that God has the power to make us new and promises to one day make the world and all things new as well. For next week, create something new (a piece of art or invention) out of old materials (used cans, newspaper or magazines, bottle caps, whatever you can find). Bring it to the next class to display for your group.